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Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume E-7, South Asia, 1969-1972

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R. KISSINGER

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: August 1, 1969

Place: Governor's House, Lahore

SUBJECT: China, Indo-Pak Relations; Military Supply

PARTICIPANTS: Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator Air Marshal Nur Khan

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Harold Saunters, National Security Council Staff

James W. Spain, Charge d'Affaires ad interim

The post-dinner conversation at Governor's House turned promptly to Communist China. Referring to the fact that he had returned the previous week from China, Nur said great things were still going on there. He spoke admiringly of the Peking regime's success in mobilizing the people for national efforts, likening the current Chinese experience to the advent of Christianity and Islam. He added he was convinced that Communist China is not expansionist but emphasized that because of the fact that they are Muslims and because of other human values which they prize, the Pakistanis cannot accept Chinese Communist ideology or a Chinese Communist approach to organization of the state. In response to a query he said that while he thought Chinese Communist ideology was in its present stage immutable, he believed that Chinese foreign policy was capable of flexibility.

Dr. Kissinger told Nur Khan that Prague Radio had broadcast a story that Chou En-Lai had said the Chicoms were prepared to negotiate with the United States if U.S. forces were withdrawn from Taiwan. Dr. Kissinger did not indicate to whom Chou had reportedly made this statement but asked Nur if he believed it.

The Air Marshal answered promptly that he thought the statement was true, but when asked if Chou had said anything like that to him, he replied in the negative. Queried whether Chou had said anything else about the United States, Nur indicated Chou had said very little about the U.S. in the course of the six hours of conversation he had had with him but had spent a great deal of time on Chicom fear and distrust of the Soviets.

According to the Air Marshal, Chou said the Soviets were deliberately provoking Peking by trying to extend their territory beyond recognized boundaries. The Chinese Communists were even prepared to accept the Thalweg border provided in the "unequal treaties" of Tsarist days. However, they would not tolerate further extensions which the Soviets were now trying to achieve. The Chinese Communists did not intend to attack the Soviets but feared the Soviets might try a pre-emptive attack on China. If this happened the Chinese knew they would be vastly out-weighed in technology and materiel but were prepared to respond in a war that "would know no boundaries."

Turning to Indo-Pak problems, the Air Marshal said that Pakistan realizes it cannot take Kashmir by force. However as long as the will of the people for self-determination remains alive, there is no reason for Pakistan to cease its support -- which, he added, is now limited to propaganda. Nur Khan said he could see why the United States and the other great powers would want a settlement of the Kashmir problem, but he could see no reason why Pakistan would benefit from such a settlement. In the present situation Pakistan obviously is not going to get what it wanted. A settlement, then, could grow only out of appeasement of India. This would formally declare Pakistan's second class status in the subcontinent. He saw no purpose in this.

Nur volunteered that Pakistan considered it much more in its interest to try to reduce tension in the area to the west. Iran and Turkey were true friends of Pakistan. Jordan and Saudi Arabia had a number of common interests with Pakistan. The building of friendship and cooperation among these states was a much more important goal than the relief of Indo-Pak tensions. Nur insisted that one of the most useful points of contact between Pakistan and the states to the west was the military. His Air Force, he said, had been helpful to all four countries. This had been possible because the Pakistani, Turkish, Iranian, Saudi Arabian, and Jordanian Air Forces all had American equipment and their officers all had a common link in their training in the United States or knowledge of American military doctrine.

On the subject of arms, the Air Marshal said that Pakistan does not want or expect much from the USSR. The Pakistan Army has gotten some equipment; he thought the Navy would probably get some; but the Air Force was not very interested in Soviet aircraft. MIG-19s and MIG-21s were already obsolete. Besides, the Air Force would suffer most from the ability of a foreign supplier to turn off the tap on spare parts. While he did not make a direct pitch for the sale of U.S. aircraft, it was clear throughout the conversation that Nur felt that this would be what would best serve his requirements.

Throughout the 45-minute discussion (which ended when Dr. Kissinger was called by President Nixon) the Air Marshal was unusually voluble. If somewhat disjointed, his conversation was relaxed and stimulating. After the meeting was over, he said privately to the Charge that he thought "a spark had been struck" in his first meeting with Dr. Kissinger in New York last November and he felt that the present conversation indicated they continued to understand each other very well.

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